

# Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District  
Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



## Velázquez Requests EPA Study of WTC

Community concerned about air, water quality after Twin Towers collapse

Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez has called on EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman to conduct an exhaustive environmental study of toxic release after the World Trade Center collapse.

"During this time of uncertainty, the Federal government must take the necessary steps to assess the risks to human health and safety, to provide people with information that will better enable them to protect themselves, and to reestablish a sense of security in the communities most affected by the terrorist attacks," the Congresswoman wrote.

Although the EPA has repeatedly stated that its testing has not revealed toxic substances in levels that are harmful to the general population, recent media reports have indicated otherwise, causing great concern that residents, workers, school children and others are being exposed to unnecessary environmental hazards.

New reports indicate that dioxins, PCBs, lead, chromium and benzene are among the toxic substances detected, sometimes at levels far exceeding federal standards. EPA monitoring devices have found contaminants in the Hudson River, especially after it rains. On October 2, for example, benzene levels from three spots around Ground Zero measured 42, 31, and 16 times higher than Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards.



An EPA worker checks an air quality monitor in New York City. Congresswoman Velázquez wants a comprehensive study of the community health effects of toxins found in the air after the World Trade Center collapse.

"We need a comprehensive survey of the health effects of these pollutants on our community," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "The public has a right to know."

## Hispanic Caucus Blasts Administration on Affirmative Action

Changes would destroy federal minority contracting program

Led by Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus called on national leaders to block a bald attempt by the Bush Administration to erase the last affirmative action program protecting minorities in federal contracting.

Under Velázquez's leadership, the 18-member Caucus demanded support of the 8(a) minority federal contracting program, which requires government contracting officers to look to minority firms first when preparing a purchase for the government.

Two weeks ago, the Small Business Administration (SBA) proposed to eliminate that priority, even though minority contracts have dropped more than 34 percent in just the last three years.

"If this regulation goes forward," the Caucus wrote to Barreto, "SBA will achieve by regulatory fiat what the courts and Congress refused to do: destroying the last bulwark of anti-discrimination and arresting 30 years of progressive opportunity for minority entrepreneurs."

"I call on our national leaders, to back up their principles with action," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "Do they support fair play or not? We refuse to allow a backdoor rule re-writing to sound the premature death knell on three decades of unfinished social progress."

8(a) is the original minority contracting program, awarding its first contract in 1969.

# Velázquez Introduces ‘Silver Scholarship’

Bill would reward senior volunteers with tuition aid

Last month, Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez introduced a new bill to allow senior citizens to earn scholarship awards for their volunteer work. Called “Silver Scholarships,” the awards will be available for their children’s or grandchildren’s education – or their own.

The Silver Scholarship would allow seniors aged 55 and older to earn a \$1,000 tuition scholarship for 500 hours of volunteer work they donate to their community during the year. They can then give this scholarship to whomever they wish.

Under Congresswoman Velázquez’s proposal, a single program in New York City would stand to benefit from \$325,000 in grants each year, supporting 60 volunteers and 30,000 additional hours of service to the community.

Congresswoman Velázquez unveiled her legislation at a community service center that serves 5,000 area residents a year through a senior citizen volunteer program.



Congresswoman Velázquez introduced her Silver Scholarship bill with a group of senior volunteers last month. The proposal would reward their community service with tuition aid.

## Con Ed Plant Needs Public Hearing

Velázquez opposes new Hudson Ave. plant permit

Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez joined community leaders to oppose granting the Consolidated Edison power plant at Hudson Ave. a “clean bill of health” to start polluting again. The current draft permit does not require a hearing or even basic clean-air protections that directly affect the health of the Brooklyn community, according to the New York Public Interest Research Group.

“The Department of Environmental Conservation must hold a public hearing on this draft permit,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “Whenever the public health is affected, the community must be allowed to be heard. The new DEC permit must take into account all air quality requirements for application to the reactivated Boiler 100 at the station. And the draft permit must be revised to ensure monitoring compliance with particulate matter emission limits.”

Congresswoman Velázquez has long fought against placement of industry that pollutes the water and air. She has opposed both the City’s and State’s attempt to locate waste transfer stations and power plants in her district without studying need, fair share, and environmental impact. These polluting industries badly affect local communities, and especially harm young and older people who have a higher susceptibility to asthma. As a consequence of existing

industry, the 12<sup>th</sup> District has one of the highest asthma rates in the country.

In Washington, Congresswoman Velázquez has filed two Environmental Justice complaints with the Environmental Protection Agency under its now-threatened Environmental Justice office, in order to prevent the siting of more toxic polluting facilities in Red Hook, Williamsburg and Greenpoint.

In January 2001, she testified against plant placement before Community Board #7 and the State’s Department of Environmental Conservation.

## Velázquez wins top environmental rating

The League of Conservation Voters recently awarded Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez a perfect score of 100% in their annual *National Environmental Scorecard*. The Scorecard reviewed members of the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress on their voting record related to the environment and rated them on their dedication to such issues.

In all of categories Congresswoman Velázquez received a pro-environment rating. In the last two Congresses, Velázquez also rated high at 97 percent. Only 13 percent of the House scored perfect this year.

### Grants Awarded to Our Community

Maimonides Medical Center.....\$173,348	Lutheran Medical Center.....\$83,333
Clinical Research	Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities
Lutheran Medical Center.....\$476,667	Al-Noor School.....\$525,869
Primary health care to uninsured and underserved	E-rate Internet connections